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ABSTRACT

The importance of using culturally authentic materials in foreign language instruction is discussed within the context of national calls for American students to understand other cultures. A brief report on a summer institute for Spanish teachers is presented. Participants studied the teaching of culture, some tenets of U.S. culture for awareness and comparison purposes, and the culture of Mexico in general and of Michoacan in particular. Coursework included information on schooling, family structure, sex roles, social class, indigenous cultures, the ritual life of the community, popular and fine arts, etc. Participants also defined and shared extensive quantities of authentic materials. Materials identified as "clearly authentic" included transcripts, greeting cards, newspapers, invitations, advertisements, menus, and schedules. "Teacher-made" materials included videos, slides, prints, and taped interviews. "Derived" materials included questionnaires for students and writings based on personal experiences. Teachers also wrote narratives to describe the "intimate" culture they had experienced, such as weddings and baptisms. Materials gathered within the Hispanic community in San Antonio, Texas, during a 2-week orientation prior to the Mexico institute were also defined as authentic. Activities and evaluation procedures were developed for classroom use. Five appendices contain the following: steps in preparing class activities based on culture-authentic materials; types of authentic materials; student response and involvement formats/functions; and an evaluation form for culture teaching. Contains 12 references. (LB)

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Culture-Authentic Materials in the Foreign Language Classroom

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In the 1988 Northeast Conference Reports the editors (1) raise the question that students can acquire authentic communicative competence only if they understand the target culture. Numerous state commissions, state boards and/or agencies of education, and the National Council of Governors among others have in recent years underlined the importance of our students' understanding other cultures. Foreign language teachers themselves generally recognize this need, as the author notes in a previous study (2). In the September 1990 News Bulletin of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics Ross Steele in "Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom (3) points out that we in the profession have a history of ignoring the importance of culture as an organizing principle. Earlier we organized our texts and curricula with a grammatical sequence; now we organize by the functions of language. We do not really organize the presentation of the target culture. While there are some frameworks, Nostrand (4) and Brooks (5) for example, and some techniques as well (Seelye (6), Robinson (7), Omaggio (8), and others), these frameworks and techniques are rarely incorporated into basic and intermediate texts. In addition, because an appropriate sequence(s) for acquisition of cultural knowledge and skills has yet to be identified, we have no developmental guidelines to follow as we have for the four language skills. Therefore, the task of integrating culture into our teaching is in some ways a difficult one. We can incorporate

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dimensions such as those proposed in the AATF culture guidelines discussed by Kramsch (9), sociolinguistic parameters, cultural knowledge , and enlightened attitudes; but we are still far from having a clear picture of specifically what content, skills, and attitudes we should include and of how to teach them.

For some years now we have focused on the use of culture-authentic materials in our classrooms as an excellent motivator and vehicle for facilitating increased understanding of the target culture. Medley and et al (10) provide an orientation and lists of sources of authentic materials. Tovar and Ludgate (11) provide an exceedingly comprehensive list of types of materials with suggestions for language activities that can be derived from them. However, teachers report certain basic concerns related to the area of culture.(12) They can access a certain number of authentic materials via the sources mentioned, friends, colleagues and/or foreign nationals who share materials, and replicas printed on textbook pages. Nevertheless they find that they still do not have enough materials and feel that often they themselves either lack sufficient familiarity with the items to contextualize them appropriately or lack the time and/or expertise to develop appropriate activities and explanations to correlate with the material that they have.

Recognizing these concerns, the author conducted a summer institute for Spanish teachers in 1989. The focus was deliberately limited to Mexico and to Michoacan in particular as a microcosm of cultural diversity within the target culture. Participants studied

the teaching of culture, some tenets of U. S. culture (for awareness and comparison purposes), and the culture of Mexico in general and of Michoacan in particular. Participants convened at the University of Texas at San Antonio in a two-week intensive framework prior to following the course to Morelia, Michoacan. There the coursework continued with input from local academics regarding schooling, family structure, sex roles, social class, indigenous cultures, the ritual life of the community, popular and fine arts, etc., all presented and discussed in Spanish. In addition participants gathered and shared extensive quantities of authentic materials. Through the program they participated in both popular and "high" culture activities, and through the homestay program they participated in family life in the home and in the broader social structure. Each participant created two major projects, all of which were shared. One project comprised instructional materials, each lesson based on an element of authentic culture that could be shared with students, elements such as documents, print media, photographs, other artifacts, slides, videos, audiotapes, etc. The activities for each element facilitated both greater cultural understanding and acquisition of some aspect of the target language through exercise of one or more of the four skills. The second project was the investigation of an aspect of culture, aspects such as comparing U. S. housing and <u>mestizo</u> housing to indigenous housing, funeral procedures and customs in Michoacan to those in Texas, etc.

As teachers began to gather material, there was extensive discussion of what constitutes authentic material. In the "clearly

authentic" category, teachers collected documents and objects made in the target culture: transcripts, identification cards, greeting cards, newspapers, driver's licenses, posters, magazine programs, pictures, grade reports, diplomas, invitations, advertisements, phone directories, menus, schedules, application forms, personal ads, cooking utensils, folk art and clothing, etc. In the "teacher-made" category they filmed video, shot slides and prints, and taped many interviews. In the "derived" category, they wrote culture assimilators (13) based on differences and misunderstandings they experienced or observed; and they also created interview questionnaires and observation questionnaires for their own students to use in their own bilingual bicultural communities (as well as exercises to use with the items in the previous categories). Teachers also wrote target language narratives (which supplemented their photographs and interviews) to describe the "intimate" culture they had experienced: family life, baptisms, quinceañeras, funerals, weddings, etc. In collecting materials teachers were sometimes intrigued by what they couldn't find; for example, catalogs proved very difficult to come by. They are far fewer, less widely available, and much briefer than in the home culture. Leading a discussion of the implications of this fact proved to be an enriching culture lesson for one participant.

Another significant issue arose as part of the discussion of the definition of authentic material. During their weeks in San Antonio teachers gathered material in Spanish produced in/by the hispanic community there. The conclusion was that this material

was authentic to a type of hispanic community and, as such, could and should be used also.

In creating activities, participants considered issues of pre, during and post use of the material, of language and culture insights and growth, and of differentiated activities and expectations for different levels of student proficiency. They planned to incorporate all four language skills and not just hearing, viewing or reading the material. They also considered physical adaptation of the material itself: segmenting audio and video tapes, enlarging and/or reducing print materials and photographs, etc. They planned evaluation procedures. They recognized that much of the little cultural material in current texts is not used in the crush of time because it is not essential by that all-too-familiar criterion: it isn't on the test. Most publisher tests include no items pertaining to culture. They considered the question of change in the target culture, how the materials they had collected might reveal change or evolution and how that element should be treated. The teachers also considered how much or how little the element differed from the students' own background experiences and what the pedagogical effect of this difference or similarity was. Appendix 1 summarizes these points; 2 and 3 add some suggestions regarding materials organized by language skills applications along with some suggested home-language and target-language functions that could be incorporated. Appendix 4 is a sample lesson overview.

At the beginning of the institute participants were asked to complete a checklist regarding their use of culture-authentic materials up to that time; and as part of a follow-up they have filled it out twice since (appendix 5). In the beginning all reported some use of such material; subsequently all reported even reater use. Such a finding is hardly surprising. Teachers who volunteer their summers to participate in institutes are already interested in the theme; and having invested their time, they are likely to use the information, models, and materials. However, they report that they have really just begun a major and lengthy transformation of their teaching. As noted earlier, it is hard to do all that one must do in language classes. To include culture at all is difficult, and there is the question of how best to do so without conducting the class in English more than absolutely necessary. Time and language use are issues still under consideration. The teachers find, however, that student interest in culture is so great that they are using more and more of their materials as they find more and more places in their texts to link the items they have. They find that the "whole language" approach to the materials helps to resolve both difficulties. Their only new goal for the future is to find more and better ways to measure student growth in cultural understanding in order to provide impetus for further materials development and further foreign language and culture study.

We began with a view like that which Edward Hall expressed in his recent article "On the Shoulders of Giants":

> The legacy of compartmentalized thought has proved to be one of the principal obstacles to intercultural understanding. As a consequence, when considering other cultures, we are faced with nothing but the most over-simplified projections of our own culture.(14)

We have long recognized the need to know the other culture and to attempt to do so through real images and artefacts and through actual contact. By continuing to emphasize this need and to add to our repertoire of knowledge, techniques and materials, we and our students are progressing a bit further toward that elusive authentic communicative competence.

APPENDIX 1
ISSUES AND STEPS IN PREPARING CLASS
ACTIVITIES BASED ON CULTURE-AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

SELECTION

Decide for yourself:
What is "authentic"?
Do I want C, c*, or both? Public or intimate or both?
Which skills/emphases do I wish to incorporate?
Which materials match my students' background experience?
Which material has a reasonable level of proficiency compared to that of my students?
Which cognitive levels do I wish to incorporate?
Which classes/regions/ethnic groups shall I include?
Do I want to show change/evolution in the target culture? How?

PREPARATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION

What physical adaptation is needed?
What "pre" activities do I need? (Preview the topic, the format, vocabulary, grammar, the activities and expected outcomes.)
How will the students experience the material? (basic hearings, viewings,readings, etc., plus comprehension checks, interim predictions and anticipations)
How will we reach closure about the content of the material? (Reaction, judgment, application, comparison to U. S., inferences,identification of change in the target culture)
How can I integrate all the language skills into the activities?
Where will I need to use English (if at all)?
How can I integrate a variety of cognitive skills/levels?
How will I test over this material?
What other evaluations shall I have?

* formal or popular

Appendix 2
TEACHING CULTURE:
AUTHENTIC MATERIALS TYPES

FOR LISTENING

Radio tapes-weather, news,
talk shows, commercials
Audio-tapes: music, self-
improvement, literature on tape
Loud-speaker tapes-airport, airplane,
sports events
Telephone tapes
Diagrams, maps (with accompanying tape or script)

FOR ROLEPLAY AND TOPIC SPEAKING*

Objects, such as traditional hand-crafted items, artesanías
Pictures, "canned" and candid, catalogs, posters, signs
Community-and/or native-speaker-based interviews
School-based "conversation lab"
where native speakers are invited in to interact with students
Sales and banking bills, receipts, deposits, etc.
Calendar
Forms: job applications, visa, hotel
Diagrams, maps
Jokes, riddles, menus
Recipes
Lengthier reading materials
* The oral material generated for all these items can become listening materials as well.

FOR READING

Magazines
Newspapers
Tickets
Schedules: movie, television, theater
bus, train, plane, etc.
Advertising-newspaper, magazine,
flyers
Programs - concerts, plays,
exhibits, races
Catalogs, directories
Forms: job application, visa, hotel
Instructions: on products, machines
Diagrams, maps
Letters
Lyrics
Jokes
Riddles
Sayings
Menu
Posters
Recipes
Signs
Telephone book
Wrappers
Texts on organization of government, schools, etc.
How-to books: gardening, constructing, cooking, decorating

FOR GRAMMAR/COMPOSITION

Target-culture materials for grammar improvements, dudas
Target-culture computer programs for composition practice
Craft objects
Canned and/or candid pictures
Schedules, tickets, receipts
Advertising
Magazines and newspapers
Calendar
Movies/television
Catalogs, directories
Instructions
Any/all the reading, listening and speaking materials
Diagrams, maps

FOR VIEWING

Candid photographs of interiors, exteriors, street scenes,
restaurant scenes, work settings, parties, weddings, etc.
Printed pictures of the above
Movie video
Postcards
Television video
Catalogs
Maps, diagrams
Instructions: dance video,
television "how to" programs

FOR VOCABULARY

Target-culture vocabulary builders and/or segments
thereof
Picture-vocabulary books
Magazines, newspapers
Advertising
Calendars
Video/audio tapes
Bills, receipts, schedules, programs
Catalogs, directories
Menus

Appendix 3
STUDENT RESPONSE/
INVOLVEMENT FORMATS/FUNCTIONS
FOR AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

In English

Explain/define/describe
Express personal reaction
Request additional information
Ask others about their reaction, experience with the topic, etc.
Anticipate-predict
Paraphrase
Discuss cross-cultural implications
Respond to comprehension checks
Compare

In the target langauage

Explain/define/describe (oral, written)
Express personal reaction (oral, written)
Request additional information (oral)
Anticipate-predict
Paraphrase (oral, written)
Compare (products, movies, etc.)
Say/ write a similar ad, announcement, etc.
Act out (be the announcer, weathercaster, etc.)
Discuss tone, mood, emotion conveyed
Analyze "propaganda" techniques
Give instructions
Sequence
Fill out forms
Title
Conclude
Tell what happened before, after
Draw and label
Contradict/support
Rank
Evaluate and decide
Discuss cross-cultural implications

Appendix 4
Sample

Material: Photographs of several types of houses in Latin America
Physical adaptation: none or enlarge
Audience: Beginners*
Objective: Students use new vocabulary.
Students speak and write about the photographs.
Students peer-edit the writings.
Students explain correctly the three housing types shown.
Prior tasks: Teacher leads discussion in English* about common U.S. housing types and any relationship to climate, class and availability of materials,
Students predict what housing may be like in Latin America.
Viewing task: Enlarged photographs are taped to the blackboard. Each has a few words and a number below it. The teacher talks in the target language about each one. Then she describes the pictures randomly and asks the students to say which one she is describing. Then students work in groups of three when each one repeats the process by describing some pictures for the others to identify.
Postviewing task: Then the students (still in threes) write. Person A writes a paragraph about one picture; B adds a paragraph, and C, a third one.
Each partnership reads the "story" aloud to the class, who then answer the teacher's extension questions.
Then the lesson closes with a summary of the "culture" concepts, including the U.S. comparison.

*The same format can be followed in Spanish for more advanced students.

Appendix 5
Culture Teaching Evaluation

Recently I have (check all that apply):

		seldom	sometimes	often
__1.	presented culture-asides	1	2	3
__2.	used assimilators	1	2	3
__3.	used capsules	1	2	3
__4.	had lecture/discussion lessons on culture	1	2	3
__5.	used slides, film, video from/about the culture	1	2	3
__6.	used music from the culture	1	2	3
__7.	used audio tapes from the culture	1	2	3
__8.	had students present culture topics	1	2	3
__9.	had bulletin boards and other realia pertaining to the culture in the room	1	2	3
__10.	had guests in class from the culture	1	2	3
__11.	had students do community-based target culture exploration	1	2	3
__12.	taken students to target culture events	1	2	3
__13.	had students bring target culture objects to show and discuss	1	2	3
__14.	used pictures from the target culture	1	2	3
__15.	used magazines and newspapers from the target culture	1	2	3
__16.	used other culture-authentic material (tickets, programs, ect.)	1	2	3
__17.	observed target culture holidays	1	2	3
__18.	utilized target culture food	1	2	3
__19.	taught target culture dances	1	2	3
__20.	taught target culture geography	1	2	3
__21.	taught target culture history	1	2	3
__22.	taught target culture fine arts	1	2	3
__23.	taught target culture literature	1	2	3
__24.	discussed daily life in the target culture	1	2	3
__25.	taught rhymes, riddles, and jokes from the target culture	1	2	3
__26.	used plays from the target culture	1	2	3
__27.	used folktales from the target culture	1	2	3
__28.	used children's songs and stories from the target culture	1	2	3
__29.	taught about regional, sex and age differences in the target culture	1	2	3
__30.	taught the non-verbal language of the target culture	1	2	3
__31.	discussed stereotypes	1	2	3
__32.	integrated culture and language-skill development	1	2	3
__33.	other culture "events in the classroom:	1	2	3

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Footnotes and Bibliography

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